

The Great and Enduring Heresy of Mohammed

by Hilaire Belloc

It might have appeared to any man watching affairs in the earlier years of the seventh century - say from 600 to 630 - that only one great main assault having been made against the Church, Arianism and its derivatives, that assault having been repelled and the Faith having won its victory, it was now secure for an indefinite time.

Christendom would have to fight for its life, of course, against outward unchristian things, that is, against Paganism. The nature worshipers of the high Persian civilization to the east would attack us in arms and try to overwhelm us. The savage paganism of barbaric tribes, Scandinavian, German, Slav and Mongol, in the north and centre of Europe would also attack Christendom and try to destroy it. The populations subject to Byzantium would continue to parade heretical views as a label for their grievances. But the main effort of heresy, at least, had failed - so it seemed. Its object, the undoing of a united Catholic civilization, had been missed. The rise of no major heresy need henceforth be feared, still less the consequent disruption of Christendom.

By AD. 630 all Gaul had long been Catholic. The last of the Arian generals and their garrisons in Italy and Spain had become orthodox. The Arian generals and garrisons of Northern Africa had been conquered by the orthodox armies of the Emperor.

It was just at this moment, a moment of apparently universal and permanent Catholicism, that there fell an unexpected blow of overwhelming magnitude and force. Islam arose - quite suddenly. It came out of the desert and overwhelmed half our civilization.

Islam - the teaching of Mohammed - conquered immediately in arms. Mohammed's Arabian converts charged into Syria and won there two great battles, the first upon the Yarmuk to the east of Palestine in the highlands above the Jordan, the second in Mesopotamia. They went on to overrun Egypt; they pushed further and further into the heart of our Christian civilization with all its grandeur of Rome. They established themselves all over Northern Africa; they raided into Asia Minor, though they did not establish themselves there as yet. They could even occasionally threaten Constantinople itself. At last, a long lifetime after their first victories in Syria, they crossed the Straits of Gibraltar into Western Europe and began to flood Spain. They even got as far as the very heart of Northern France, between Poitiers and Tours, less than a hundred years after their first victories in Syria - in A.D. 732.

They were ultimately thrust back to the Pyrenees, but they continued to hold all Spain except the mountainous north-western corner. They held all Roman Africa, including Egypt, and all Syria. They dominated the whole Mediterranean west and east: held its islands, raided and left armed settlements even on the shores of Gaul and Italy. They spread mightily throughout Hither Asia, overwhelming the Persian realm. They were an increasing menace to Constantinople. Within a hundred years, a main part of the Roman world had fallen under the power of this new and strange force from the Desert.

Such a revolution had never been. No earlier attack had been so sudden, so violent or so permanently successful. Within a score of years from the first assault in 634 the Christian Levant had gone: Syria, the cradle of the Faith, and Egypt with Alexandria, the mighty Christian See. Within a lifetime half the wealth and nearly half the territory of the Christian Roman Empire was in the hands of Mohammedan masters and officials, and the mass of the population was becoming affected more and more by this new thing.

Mohammedan government and influence had taken the place of Christian government and influence, and were on the way to making the bulk of the Mediterranean on the east and the south Mohammedan.

We are about to follow the fortunes of this extraordinary thing which still calls itself Islam, that is, "The Acceptation" of the morals and simple doctrines which Mohammed had preached.

I shall later describe the historical origin of the thing, giving the dates of its progress and the stages of its original success. I shall describe the consolidation of it, its increasing power and the threat which it remained to our civilization. It very nearly destroyed us. It kept up the battle against Christendom actively for a thousand years, and the story is by no means over; the power of Islam may at any moment re-arise.

But before following that story we must grasp the two fundamental things - *first*, the nature of Mohammedanism; *second*, the essential cause of its sudden and, as it were, miraculous success over so many thousands of miles of territory and so many millions of human beings.

Mohammedanism was a *heresy*: that is the essential point to grasp before going any further. It began as a heresy, not as a new religion. It was not a pagan contrast with the Church; it was not an alien enemy. It was a perversion of Christian doctrine. Its vitality and endurance soon gave it the appearance of a new religion, but those who were contemporary with its rise saw it for what it was - not a denial, but an adaptation and a misuse, of the Christian thing. It differed from most (not from all) heresies in this, that it did not arise within the bounds of the Christian Church. The chief heresiarch, Mohammed himself, was not, like most heresiarchs, a man of Catholic birth and doctrine to begin with. He sprang from pagans. But that which he taught was in the main Catholic doctrine, oversimplified. It was the great Catholic world - on the frontiers of which he lived, whose influence was all around him and whose territories he had known by travel - which inspired his convictions. He came of, and mixed with, the degraded idolaters of the Arabian wilderness, the conquest of which had never seemed worth the Romans' while.

He took over very few of those old pagan ideas which might have been native to him from his descent. On the contrary, he preached and insisted upon a whole group of ideas which were peculiar to the Catholic Church and distinguished it from the paganism which it had conquered in the Greek and Roman civilization. Thus the very foundation of his teaching was that prime Catholic doctrine, the unity and omnipotence of God. The attributes of God he also took over in the main from Catholic doctrine: the personal nature, the all-goodness, the timelessness, the providence of God, His creative power as the origin of all things, and His sustenance of all things by His power alone. The world of good spirits and angels and of evil spirits in rebellion against God was a part of the teaching, with a chief evil spirit, such as Christendom had recognized. Mohammed preached with insistence that prime Catholic doctrine, on the human side - the immortality of the soul and its responsibility for actions in this life, coupled with the consequent doctrine of punishment and reward after death.

If anyone sets down those points that orthodox Catholicism has in common with Mohammedanism, and those points only, one might imagine if one went no further that there should have been no cause of quarrel. Mohammed would almost seem in this aspect to be a sort of missionary, preaching and spreading by the energy of his character the chief and fundamental doctrines of the Catholic Church among those who had hitherto been degraded pagans of the Desert. He gave to Our Lord the highest reverence, and to Our Lady also, for that matter. On the day of judgment (another Catholic idea which he taught) it was Our Lord, according to Mohammed, who would be the judge of mankind, not he, Mohammed. The Mother of Christ, Our Lady, "the Lady Miriam" was ever for him the first of womankind. His followers even got from the early fathers some vague hint of her Immaculate Conception.[1]

But the central point where this new heresy struck home with a mortal blow against Catholic tradition was a full denial of the Incarnation.

Mohammed did not merely take the first steps toward that denial, as the Arians and their followers had done; he advanced a clear affirmation, full and complete, against the whole doctrine of an incarnate God. He taught that Our Lord was the greatest of all the prophets, but still only a prophet: a man like other men. He eliminated the Trinity altogether.

With that denial of the Incarnation went the whole sacramental structure. He refused to know anything of the Eucharist, with its Real Presence; he stopped the sacrifice of the Mass, and therefore the institution of a special priesthood. In other words, he, like so many other lesser heresiarchs, founded his heresy on simplification.

Catholic doctrine was true (he seemed to say), but it had become encumbered with false accretions; it had become complicated by needless man-made additions, including the idea that its founder was Divine, and the growth of a parasitical caste of priests who battened on a late, imagined, system of Sacraments which they alone could administer. All those corrupt accretions must be swept away.

There is thus a very great deal in common between the enthusiasm with which Mohammed's teaching attacked the priesthood, the Mass and the sacraments, and the enthusiasm with which Calvinism, the central motive force of the Reformation, did the same. As we all know, the new

teaching relaxed the marriage laws - but in practice this did not affect the mass of his followers who still remained monogamous. It made divorce as easy as possible, for the sacramental idea of marriage disappeared. It insisted upon the equality of men, and it necessarily had that further factor in which it resembled Calvinism - the sense of predestination, the sense of fate; of what the followers of John Knox were always calling "the immutable decrees of God."

Mohammed's teaching never developed among the mass of his followers, or in his own mind, a detailed theology. He was content to accept all that appealed to him in the Catholic scheme and to reject all that seemed to him, and to so many others of his time, too complicated or mysterious to be true. Simplicity was the note of the whole affair; and since all heresies draw their strength from some true doctrine, Mohammedanism drew its strength from the true Catholic doctrines which it retained: the equality of all men before God - "All true believers are brothers." It zealously preached and threw on the paramount claims of justice, social and economic.

Now, why did this new, simple, energetic heresy have its sudden overwhelming success?

One answer is that it won battles. It won them at once, as we shall see when we come to the history of the thing. But winning battles could not have made Islam permanent or even strong had there not been a state of affairs awaiting some such message and ready to accept it.

Both in the world of Hither Asia and in the Graeco-Roman world of the Mediterranean, but especially in the latter, society had fallen, much as our society has today, into a tangle wherein the bulk of men were disappointed and angry and seeking for a solution to the whole group of social strains. There was indebtedness everywhere; the power of money and consequent usury. There was slavery everywhere. Society reposed upon it, as ours reposes upon wage slavery today. There was weariness and discontent with theological debate, which, for all its intensity, had grown out of touch with the masses. There lay upon the freemen, already tortured with debt, a heavy burden of imperial taxation; and there was the irritant of existing central government interfering with men's lives; there was the tyranny of the lawyers and their charges.

To all this Islam came as a vast relief and a solution of strain. The slave who admitted that Mohammed was the prophet of God and that the new teaching had, therefore, divine authority, ceased to be a slave. The slave who adopted Islam was henceforward free. The debtor who "accepted" was rid of his debts. Usury was forbidden. The small farmer was relieved not only of his debts but of his crushing taxation. Above all, justice could be had without buying it from lawyers. . . . All this in theory. The practice was not nearly so complete. Many a convert remained a debtor, many were still slaves. But wherever Islam conquered there was a new spirit of freedom and relaxation.

It was the combination of all these things, the attractive simplicity of the doctrine, the sweeping away of clerical and imperial discipline, the huge immediate practical advantage of freedom for the slave and riddance of anxiety for the debtor, the crowning advantage of free justice under few and simple new laws easily understood - that formed the driving force behind the astonishing Mohammedan social victory. The courts were everywhere accessible to all without payment and giving verdicts which all could understand. The Mohammedan movement

was essentially a "Reformation," and we can discover numerous affinities between Islam and the Protestant Reformers - on Images, on the Mass, on Celibacy, etc.

The marvel seems to be, not so much that the new emancipation swept over men much as we might imagine Communism to sweep over our industrial world today, but that there should still have remained, as there remained for generations, a prolonged and stubborn resistance to Mohammedanism.

There you have, I think, the nature of Islam and of its first original blaze of victory.

We have just seen what was the main cause of Islam's extraordinarily rapid spread; a complicated and fatigued society, and one burdened with the institution of slavery; one, moreover, in which millions of peasants in Egypt, Syria and all the East, crushed with usury and heavy taxation, were offered immediate relief by the new creed, or rather, the new heresy. Its note was simplicity and therefore it was suited to the popular mind in a society where hitherto a restricted class had pursued its quarrels on theology and government.

That is the main fact which accounts for the sudden spread of Islam after its first armed victory over the armies rather than the people of the Greek-speaking Eastern Empire. But this alone would not account for two other equally striking triumphs. The first was the power the new heresy showed of absorbing the Asiatic people of the Near East, Mesopotamia and the mountain land between it and India. The second was the wealth and the splendour of the Caliphate (that is, of the central Mohammedan monarchy) in the generations coming immediately after the first sweep of victory.

The first of these points, the spread over Mesopotamia and Persia and the mountain land towards India, was not, as in the case of the sudden successes in Syria and Egypt, due to the appeal of simplicity, freedom from slavery and relief from debt. It was due to a certain underlying historical character in the Near East which has always influenced its society and continues to influence it today. That character is a sort of natural uniformity. There has been inherent in it from times earlier than any known historical record, a sort of instinct for obedience to one religious head, which is also the civil head, and a general similarity of social culture. When we talk of the age-long struggle between Asia and the West, we mean by the word "Asia" all that sparse population of the mountain land beyond Mesopotamia towards India, its permanent influence upon the Mesopotamian plains themselves, and its potential influence upon even the highlands and sea coast of Syria and Palestine.

The struggle between Asia and Europe swings over a vast period like a tide ebbing and flowing. For nearly a thousand years, from the conquest of Alexander to the coming of the Mohammedan Reformers (333 B.C. - 634), the tide had set eastward; that is, Western influences - Greek, and then Greek and Roman - had flooded the debatable land. For a short period of about two and a half to three centuries even Mesopotamia was superficially Greek - in its governing class, at any rate. Then Asia began to flood back again westward. The old Pagan Roman Empire and the Christian Empire, which succeeded it and which was governed from Constantinople, were never able to hold permanently the land beyond the Euphrates. The new push from Asia westward was led by the Persians, and the Persians and Parthians (which last were a division of

the Persians) not only kept their hold on Mesopotamia but were able to carry out raids into Roman territory itself, right up to the end of that period. In the last few years before the appearance of Mohammedanism they had appeared on the Mediterranean coast and had sacked Jerusalem.

Now when Islam came with its first furious victorious cavalry charges springing from the desert, it powerfully reinforced this tendency of Asia to reassert itself. The uniformity of temper which is the mark of Asiatic society, responded at once to this new idea of one very simple, personal form of government, sanctified by religion, and ruling with a power theoretically absolute from one centre. The Caliphate once established at Bagdad, Bagdad became just what Babylon had been; the central capital of one vast society, giving its tone to all the lands from the Indian borders to Egypt and beyond.

But even more remarkable than the flooding of all near Asia with Mohammedanism in one lifetime was the wealth and splendour and culture of the new Islamic Empire. Islam was in those early centuries (most of the seventh, all the eighth and ninth), the highest material civilization of our occidental world. The city of Constantinople was also very wealthy and enjoyed a very high civilization, which radiated over dependent provinces, Greece and the seaboard of the Aegean and the uplands of Asia Minor, but it was focussed in the imperial city; in the greater part of the country-sides culture was on the decline. In the West it was notoriously so. Gaul and Britain, and in some degree Italy, and the valley of the Danube, fell back towards barbarism. They never became completely barbaric, not even in Britain, which was the most remote; but they were harried and impoverished, and lacked proper government. From the fifth century to the early eleventh (say AD. 450 to AD. 1030) ran the period which we call "The Dark Ages" of Europe in spite of Charlemagne's experiment.

So much for the Christian world of that time, against which Islam was beginning to press so heavily; which had lost to Islam the whole of Spain and certain islands and coasts of the central Mediterranean as well. Christendom was under siege from Islam. Islam stood up against us in dominating splendour and wealth and power, and, what was even more important, with superior knowledge in the practical and applied sciences.

Islam preserved the Greek philosophers, the Greek mathematicians and their works, the physical science of the Greek and Roman earlier writers. Islam was also far more lettered than was Christendom. In the mass of the West most men had become illiterate. Even in Constantinople reading and writing were not as common as they were in the world governed by the Caliph.

One might sum up and say that the contrast between the Mohammedan world of those early centuries and the Christian world which it threatened to overwhelm was like the contrast between a modern industrialized state and a backward, half-developed state next door to it: the contrast between modern Germany, for instance, and its Russian neighbor. The contrast was not as great as that, but the modern parallel helps one to understand it. For centuries to come Islam was to remain a menace, even though Spain was re-conquered. In the East it became more than a menace, and spread continually for seven hundred years, until it had mastered the Balkans and

the Hungarian plain, and all but occupied Western Europe itself. Islam was the one heresy that nearly destroyed Christendom through its early material and intellectual superiority.

Now why was this? It seems inexplicable when we remember the uncertain and petty personal leaderships, the continual changes of local dynasties, the shifting foundation of the Mohammedan effort. That effort began with the attack of a very few thousand desert horsemen, who were as much drawn by desire for loot as by their enthusiasm for new doctrines. Those doctrines had been preached to a very sparse body of nomads, boasting but very few permanently inhabited centres. They had originated in a man remarkable indeed for the intensity of his nature, probably more than half convinced, probably also a little mad, and one who had never shown constructive ability - yet Islam conquered.

Mohammed was a camel driver, who had had the good luck to make a wealthy marriage with a woman older than himself. From the security of that position he worked out his visions and enthusiasms, and undertook his propaganda. But it was all done in an ignorant and very small way. There was no organization, and the moment the first bands had succeeded in battle, the leaders began fighting among themselves: not only fighting, but murdering. The story of all the first lifetime, and a little more, after the original rush - the story of the Mohammedan government (such as it was) so long as it was centred in Damascus, is a story of successive intrigue and murder. Yet when the second dynasty which presided for so long over Islam, the Abbasides, with their capital further east at Bagdad, on the Euphrates, restored the old Mesopotamian domination over Syria, ruling also Egypt and all the Mohammedan world, that splendour and science, material power and wealth of which I spoke, arose and dazzled all contemporaries, and we must ask the question again: why was this?

The answer lies in the very nature of the Mohammedan conquest. It did *not*, as has been so frequently repeated, destroy at once what it came across; it did *not* exterminate all those who would not accept Islam. It was just the other way. It was remarkable among all the powers which have ruled these lands throughout history for what has wrongly been called its "tolerance." The Mohammedan temper was not tolerant. It was, on the contrary, fanatical and bloodthirsty. It felt no respect for, nor even curiosity about, those from whom it differed. It was absurdly vain of itself, regarding with contempt the high Christian culture about it. It still so regards it even today.

But the conquerors, and those whom they converted and attached to themselves from the native populations, were still too few to govern by force. And (what is more important) they had no idea of organization. They were always slipshod and haphazard. Therefore a very large majority of the conquered remained in their old habits of life and of religion.

Slowly the influence of Islam spread through these, but during the first centuries the great majority in Syria, and even in Mesopotamia and Egypt, were Christian, keeping the Christian Mass, the Christian Gospels, and all the Christian tradition. It was they who preserved the Graeco-Roman civilization from which they descended, and it was that civilization, surviving under the surface of Mohammedan government, which gave their learning and material power to the wide territories which we must call, even so early, "the Mohammedan world," though the bulk of it was not yet Mohammedan in creed.

But there was another - and it is the most important cause. The fiscal cause: the overwhelming wealth of the early Mohammedan Caliphate. The merchant and the tiller of the land, the owner of property and the negotiator, were everywhere relieved by the Mohammedan conquest; for a mass of usury was swept away, as was an intricate system of taxation which had become clogged, ruining the taxpayer without corresponding results for the government. What the Arabian conquerors and their successors in Mesopotamia did was to replace all that by a simple, straight system of tribute.

What ever was not Mohammedan in the immense Mohammedan Empire - that is, much the most of its population was subject to a special tribute; and it was this tribute which furnished directly, without loss from the intricacies of bureaucracy, the wealth of the central power: the revenue of the Caliph. That revenue remained enormous during all the first generations. The result was that which always follows upon a high concentration of wealth in one governing centre; the whole of the society governed from that centre reflects the opulence of its directors.

There we have the explanation of that strange, that unique phenomenon in history - a revolt against civilization which did not destroy civilization; a consuming heresy which did not destroy the Christian religion against which it was directed.

The world of Islam became and long remained, the heir of the old Graeco-Roman culture and the preserver thereof. Thence was it that, alone of all the great heresies, Mohammedanism not only survived, and is, after nearly fourteen centuries, as strong as ever spiritually. In time it struck roots and established a civilization of its own over against ours, and a permanent rival to us.

Now that we have understood why Islam, the most formidable of heresies, achieved its strength and astounding success we must try to understand why, alone of all the heresies, it has survived in full strength and even continues (after a fashion) to expand to this day.

This is a point of decisive importance to the understanding not only of our subject but of the history of the world in general. Yet it is one which is, unfortunately, left almost entirely undiscussed in the modern world.

Millions of modern people of the white civilization that is, the civilization of Europe and America have forgotten all about Islam. They have never come in contact with it. They take for granted that it is decaying, and that, anyway, it is just a foreign religion which will not concern them. It is, as a fact, the most formidable and persistent enemy which our civilization has had, and may at any moment become as large a menace in the future as it has been in the past.

To that point of its future menace I shall return in the last of these pages on Mohammedanism.

All the great heresies - save this one of Mohammedanism - seem to go through the same phases.

First they rise with great violence and become fashionable; they do so by insisting on some one of the great Catholic doctrines in an exaggerated fashion; and because the great Catholic

doctrines combined form the only full and satisfactory philosophy known to mankind, each doctrine is bound to have its special appeal.

Thus Arianism insisted on the unity of God, combined with the majesty and creative power of Our Lord. At the same time it appealed to imperfect minds because it tried to rationalize a mystery. Calvinism again had a great success because it insisted on another main doctrine, the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God. It got the rest out of proportion and went violently wrong on Predestination; but it had its moment of triumph when it looked as though it were going to conquer all our civilization - which it would have done if the French had not fought it in their great religious war and conquered its adherents on that soil of Gaul which has always been the battle ground and testing place of European ideas.

After this first phase of the great heresies, when they are in their initial vigour and spread like a flame from man to man, there comes a second phase of decline, lasting, apparently (according to some obscure law), through about five or six generations: say a couple of hundred years or a little more. The adherents of the heresy grow less numerous and less convinced until at last only quite a small number can be called full and faithful followers of the original movement.

Then comes the third phase, when each heresy wholly disappears as a bit of doctrine: no one believes the doctrine any more or only such a tiny fraction remain believers that they no longer count. But the social and moral factors of the heresy remain and may be of powerful effect for generations more. We see that in the case of Calvinism today. Calvinism produced the Puritan movement and from that there proceeded as a necessary consequence of the isolation of the soul, the backup of corporate social action, unbridled competition and greed, and at last the full establishment of what we call "Industrial Capitalism" today, whereby civilization is now imperilled through the discontent of the vast destitute majority with their few plutocratic masters. There is no one left except perhaps a handful of people in Scotland who really believe the doctrines Calvin taught, but the spirit of Calvinism is still very strong in the countries it originally infected, and its social fruits remain.

Now in the case of Islam none of all this happened except the *first* phase. There was no second phase of gradual decline in the numbers and conviction of its followers. On the contrary Islam grew from strength to strength acquiring more and more territory, converting more and more followers, until it had established itself as a quite separate civilization and seemed so like a new religion that most people came to forget its origin as a heresy.

Islam increased not only in numbers and in the conviction of its followers but in territory and in actual political and armed power until close on the eighteenth century. Less than 100 years before the American War of Independence a Mohammedan army was threatening to overrun and destroy Christian civilization, and would have done so if the Catholic King of Poland had not destroyed that army outside Vienna.

Since then the armed power of Mohammedanism has declined; but neither its numbers nor the conviction of its followers have appreciably declined; and as to the territory annexed by it, though it has lost places in which it ruled over subject Christian majorities, it has gained new adherents - to some extent in Asia, and largely in Africa. Indeed in Africa it is still expanding

among the negroid populations, and that expansion provides an important future problem for the European Governments who have divided Africa between them.

And there is another point in connection with this power of Islam. Islam is apparently *unconvertible*.

The missionary efforts made by great Catholic orders which have been occupied in trying to turn Mohammedans into Christians for nearly 400 years have everywhere wholly failed. We have in some places driven the Mohammedan master out and freed his Christian subjects from Mohammedan control, but we have had hardly any effect in converting individual Mohammedans save perhaps to some small amount in Southern Spain 500 years ago; and even so that was rather an example of political than of religious change.

Now what is the explanation of all this? Why should Islam alone of all the great heresies show such continued vitality?

Those who are sympathetic with Mohammedanism and still more those who are actually Mohammedans explain it by proclaiming it the best and most human of religions, the best suited to mankind, and the most attractive.

Strange as it may seem, there are a certain number of highly educated men, European gentlemen, who have actually joined Islam, that is, who are personal converts to Mohammedanism. I myself have known and talked to some half-dozen of them in various parts of the world, and there are a very much larger number of similar men, well instructed Europeans, who, having lost their faith in Catholicism or in some form of Protestantism in which they were brought up, feel sympathy with the Mohammedan social scheme although they do not actually join it or profess belief in its religion. We constantly meet men of this kind today among those who have travelled in the East.

These men always give the same answer - Islam is indestructible because it is founded on simplicity and justice. It has kept those Christian doctrines which are evidently true and which appeal to the common sense of millions, while getting rid of priestcraft, mysteries, sacraments, and all the rest of it. It proclaims and practices human equality. It loves justice and forbids usury. It produces a society in which men are happier and feel their own dignity more than in any other. That is its strength and that is why it still converts people and endures and will perhaps return to power in the near future.

Now I do not think that explanation to be the true one. All heresy talks in those terms. Every heresy will tell you that it has purified the corruptions of Christian doctrines and in general done nothing but good to mankind, satisfied the human soul, and so on. Yet every one of them *except* Mohammedanism has faded out. Why?

In order to get the answer to the problem we must remark in what the fortunes of Islam have differed from those of all the other great heresies, and when we remark that I think we shall have the clue to the truth.

Islam has differed from all the other heresies in two main points which must be carefully noticed:

(1) It did not rise within the Church, that is, within the frontiers of our civilization. Its heresiarch was not a man originally Catholic who led away Catholic followers by his novel doctrine as did Arius or Calvin. He was an outsider born a pagan, living among pagans, and never baptized. He adopted Christian doctrines and selected among them in the true heresiarch fashion. He dropped those that did not suit him and insisted on those that did - which is the mark of the heresiarch - but he did not do this as from within; his action was external.

Those first small but fierce armies of nomad Arabs who won their astounding victories in Syria and Egypt against the Catholic world of the early seventh century were made of men who had all been pagans before they became Mohammedan. There was among them no previous Catholicism to which they might return.

(2) This body of Islam attacking Christendom from beyond its frontiers and not breaking it up from within, happened to be continually recruited with fighting material of the strongest kind and drafted in from the pagan outer darkness.

This recruitment went on in waves, incessantly, through the centuries until the end of the Middle Ages. It was mainly Mongol coming from Asia (though some of it was Berber coming from North Africa), and it was this ceaseless, recurrent impact of new adherents, conquerors and fighters as the original Arabs had been, which gave Islam its formidable resistance and continuance of power.

Not long after the first conquest of Syria and Egypt it looked as though the enthusiastic new heresy, in spite of its dazzling sudden triumph, would fail. The continuity in leadership broke down. So did the political unity of the whole scheme. The original capital of the movement was Damascus and at first Mohammedanism was a Syrian thing (and, by extension, an Egyptian thing); but after quite a short time a break-up was apparent. A new dynasty began ruling from Mesopotamia and no longer from Syria. The Western Districts, that is North Africa and Spain (after the conquest of Spain), formed a separate political government under a separate obedience. *But the caliphs at Baghdad began to support themselves by a bodyguard of hired fighters who were Mongols from the steppes of Asia.*

The characteristic of these nomadic Mongols (who come after the fifth century over and over again in waves to the assault against our civilization), is that they are indomitable fighters and at the same time almost purely destructive. They massacre by the million; they burn and destroy; they turn fertile districts into desert. They seem incapable of creative effort.

Twice we in the Christian European West have barely escaped final destruction at their hands; once when we defeated the vast Asiatic army of Attila near Chalons in France, in the middle of the fifth century (not before he had committed horrible outrage and left ruin behind him everywhere), and again in the thirteenth century, 800 years later. Then the advancing Asiatic Mongol power was checked, not by our armies but by the death of the man who had united it in his one hand. But it was not checked till it reached north Italy and was approaching Venice.

It was this recruitment of Mongol bodyguards in successive instalments which kept Islam going and prevented its suffering the fate that all other heresies had suffered. It kept Islam thundering like a battering ram from *outside the frontiers* of Europe, making breaches in our defence and penetrating further and further into what had been Christian lands.

The Mongol invaders readily accepted Islam; the men who served as mercenary soldiers and formed the real power of the Caliphs were quite ready to conform to the simple requirements of Mohammedanism. They had no regular religion of their own strong enough to counteract the effects of those doctrines of Islam which, mutilated as they were, were in the main Christian doctrines - the unity and majesty of God, the immortality of the soul and all the rest of it. The Mongol mercenaries supporting the political power of the Caliphs were attracted to these main doctrines and easily adopted them. They became good Moslems and as soldiers supporting the Caliphs were thus propagators and maintainers of Islam.

When in the heart of the Middle Ages it looked as though again Islam had failed, a new batch of Mongol soldiers, "Turks" by name, came in and saved the fortunes of Mohammedanism again although they began by the most abominable destruction of such civilization as Mohammedanism had preserved. That is why in the struggles of the Crusades Christians regarded the enemy as "The Turk"; a general name common to many of these nomad tribes. The Christian preachers of the Crusades and captains of the soldiers and the Crusaders in their songs speak of "The Turk" as the enemy much more than they do in general of Mohammedanism.

In spite of the advantage of being fed by continual recruitment, the pressure of Mohammedanism upon Christendom might have failed after all, had one supreme attempt to relieve that pressure upon the Christian West succeeded. That supreme attempt was made in the middle of the whole business (AD. 1095-1200) and is called in history "The Crusades." Catholic Christendom succeeded in recapturing Spain; it nearly succeeded in pushing back Mohammedanism from Syria, in saving the Christian civilization of Asia, and in cutting off the Asiatic Mohammedan from the African. Had it done so perhaps Mohammedanism would have died.

But the Crusades failed. Their failure is the major tragedy in the history of our struggle against Islam, that is, against Asia - against the East.

What the Crusades were, and why and how they failed I shall now describe.

The success of Mohammedanism had not been due to its offering something more satisfactory in the way of philosophy and morals, but, as I have said, to the opportunity it afforded of freedom to the slave and debtor, and an extreme simplicity which pleased the unintelligent masses who were perplexed by the mysteries inseparable from the profound intellectual life of Catholicism, and from its radical doctrine of the Incarnation. But it was spreading and it looked as though it were bound to win universally, as do all great heresies in their beginnings, because it was the fashionable thing of the time - the conquering thing.

Now against the great heresies, when they acquire the driving power of being the new and fashionable thing, there arises a reaction within the Christian and Catholic mind, which reaction

gradually turns the current backward, gets rid of the poison and re-establishes Christian civilization. Such reactions, begin, I repeat, obscurely. It is the plain man who gets uncomfortable and says to himself, "This may be the fashion of the moment, but I don't like it." It is the mass of Christian men who feel in their bones that there is something wrong, though they have difficulty in explaining it. The reaction is usually slow and muddled and for a long time not successful. But in the long run with internal heresy it has always succeeded; just as the native health of the human body succeeds in getting rid of some internal infection.

A heresy, when it is full of its original power, affects even Catholic thought - thus Arianism produced a mass of semi-Arianism running throughout Christendom. The Manichean dread of the body and the false doctrine that matter is evil affected even the greatest Catholics of the time. There is a touch of it in the letters of the great St. Gregory. In the same way Mohammedanism had its affect on the Christian Emperors of Byzantium and on Charlemagne, the Emperor of the West; for instance there was a powerful movement started against the use of images, which are so essential to Catholic worship. Even in the West, where Mohammedanism had never reached, the attempt to get rid of images in the churches nearly succeeded.

But while Mohammedanism was spreading, absorbing greater and greater numbers into its own body; out of the subject Christian populations of East and North Africa, occupying more and more territory, a defensive reaction against it had begun. Islam gradually absorbed North Africa and crossed over into Spain; less than a century after those first victories in Syria it even pushed across the Pyrenees, right into France. Luckily it was defeated in battle halfway between Tours and Poitiers in the north centre of the country. Some think that if the Christian leaders had not won battle, the whole of Christendom would have been swamped by Mohammedanism. At any rate from that moment in the West it never advanced further. It was pushed back to the Pyrenees, and very slowly indeed over a period of 300 years it was thrust further and further south toward the centre of Spain, the north of which was cleared again of Mohammedan influence. In the East, however, as we shall see, it continued to be an overwhelming threat.

Now the success of Christian men in pushing back the Mohammedan from France and halfway down Spain began a sort of re-awakening in Europe. It was high time. We of the West had been besieged in three ways; pagan Asiatics had come upon us in the very heart of the Germanies; pagan pirates of the most cruel and disgusting sort had swarmed over the Northern Seas and nearly wiped out Christian civilization in England and hurt it also in Northern France; and with all that there had been this pressure of Mohammedanism coming from the South and South-east - a much more civilized pressure than that of the Asiatics or Scandinavian pirates but still a menace, under which our Christian civilization came near to disappearing.

It is most interesting to take a map of Europe and mark off the extreme limits reached by the enemies of Christendom during the worst of this struggle for existence. The outriders of the worst Asiatic raid got as far as Tournus on the Saône, which is in the very middle of what is France today; the Mohammedan got, as we have seen, to the very middle of France also, somewhere between Tournus and Poitiers. The horrible Scandinavian pagan pirates raided Ireland, all England, and came up all the rivers of Northern France and Northern Germany. They got as far as Cologne, they besieged Paris, they nearly took Hamburg. People today forget how very doubtful a thing it was in the height of the Dark Ages, between the middle of the eighth and

the end of the ninth century, whether Catholic civilization would survive at all. Half the Mediterranean Islands had fallen to the Mohammedan, all the Near East; he was fighting to get hold of Asia Minor; and the North and centre of Europe were perpetually raided by the Asiatics and the Northern pagans.

Then came the great reaction and the awakening of Europe.

The chivalry which poured out of Gaul into Spain and the native Spanish knights forcing back the Mohammedans began the affair. The Scandinavian pirates and the raiders from Asia had been defeated two generations before. Pilgrimages to Jerusalem, distant, expensive and perilous, but continuous throughout the Dark Ages, were now especially imperilled through a new Mongol wave of Mohammedan soldiers establishing themselves over the East and especially in Palestine; and the cry arose that the Holy Places, the True Cross (which was preserved in Jerusalem) and the remaining Christian communities of Syria and Palestine, and above all the Holy Sepulchre - the site of the Resurrection, the main object of every pilgrimage - ought to be saved from the usurping hands of Islam. Enthusiastic men preached the duty of marching eastward and rescuing the Holy Land; the reigning Pope, Urban, put himself at the head of the movement in a famous sermon delivered in France to vast crowds, who cried out: "God wills it." Irregular bodies began to pour out eastward for the thrusting back of Islam from the Holy Land, and in due time the regular levies of great Christian Princes prepared for an organized effort on a vast scale. Those who vowed themselves to pursue the effort took the badge of the Cross on their clothing, and from this the struggle became to be known as the Crusades.

The First Crusade was launched in three great bodies of more or less organized Christian soldiery, who set out to march from Western Europe to the Holy Land. I say "more or less organized" because the feudal army was never highly organized; it was divided into units of very different sizes each following a feudal lord - but of course it had sufficient organization to carry a military enterprise through, because a mere herd of men can never do that. In order not to exhaust the provisions of the countries through which they had to march the Christian leaders went in three bodies, one from Northern France, going down the valley of the Danube; another from Southern France, going across Italy; and a third of Frenchmen who had recently acquired dominion in Southern Italy and who crossed the Adriatic directly, making for Constantinople through the Balkans. They all joined at Constantinople, and by the time they got there, there were still in spite of losses on the way something which may have been a quarter of a million men - perhaps more. The numbers were never accurately known or computed.

The Emperor at Constantinople was still free, at the head of his great Christian capital, but he was dangerously menaced by the fighting Mohammedan Turks who were only just over the water in Asia Minor, and whose object it was to get hold of Constantinople and so press on to the ruin of Christendom. This pressure on Constantinople the great mass of the Crusaders immediately relieved; they won a battle against the Turks at Dorylaeum and pressed on with great difficulty and further large losses of men till they reached the corner where Syria joins onto Asia Minor at the Gulf of Alexandretta. There, one of the Crusading leaders carved out a kingdom for himself, making his capital at the Christian town of Edessa, to serve as a bulwark against further Mohammedan pressure from the East. The last of the now dwindling Christian forces besieged and with great difficulty took Antioch, which the Mohammedans had got hold of

a few years before. Here another Crusading leader made himself feudal lord, and there was a long delay and a bad quarrel between the Crusaders and the Emperor of Constantinople, who naturally wanted them to return to him what had been portions of his realm before Mohammedanism had grown up - while the Crusaders wanted to keep what they had conquered so that the revenues might become an income for each of them.

At last they got away from Antioch at the beginning of the open season of the third year after they started - the last year of the eleventh century, 1099; they took all the towns along the coast as they marched; when they got on a level with Jerusalem they struck inland and stormed the city on the 15th of July of that year, killing all the Mohammedan garrison and establishing themselves firmly within the walls of the Holy City. They then organized their capture into a feudal kingdom, making one of their number titular King of the new realm of Jerusalem. They chose for that office a great noble of the country where the Teutonic and Gallic races meet in the north-east of France - Godfrey of Bouillon, a powerful Lord of the Marches. He had under him as nominal inferiors the great feudal lords who had carved out districts for themselves from Edessa southwards, and those who had built and established themselves in the great stone castles which still remain, among the finest ruins in the world.

By the time the Crusaders had accomplished their object and seized the Holy Places they had dwindled to a very small number of men. It is probable that the actual fighting men, as distinguished from servants, camp followers and the rest, present at the siege of Jerusalem, did not count much more than 15,000. And upon that force everything turned. Syria had not been thoroughly recovered, nor the Mohammedans finally thrust back; the seacoast was held with the support of a population still largely Christian, but the plain and the seacoast and Palestine up to the Jordan make only a narrow strip behind which and parallel to which comes a range of hills which in the middle of the country are great mountains - the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon. Behind that again the country turns into desert, and on the edge of the desert there is a string of towns which are, as it were, the ports of the desert - that is, the points where the caravans arrive.

These "ports of the desert" have always been rendered very important by commerce, and their names go back well beyond the beginning of recorded history. A string of towns thus stretched along the edge of the desert begins from Aleppo in the north down as far as Petra, south of the Dead Sea. They were united by the great caravan route which reaches to North Arabia, and they were all predominantly Mohammedan by the time of the Crusading effort. The central one of these towns and the richest, the great mark of Syria, is Damascus. If the first Crusaders had had enough men to take Damascus their effort would have been permanently successful. But their forces were insufficient for that, they could only barely hold the sea coast of Palestine up to the Jordan - and even so they held it only by the aid of immense fortified works.

There was a good deal of commerce with Europe, but not sufficient recruitment of forces, and the consequence was that the vast sea of Mohammedanism all around began to seep in and undermine the Christian position. The first sign of what was coming was the fall of Edessa (the capital of the north-eastern state of the Crusading federation, the state most exposed to attack), less than half a century after the first capture of Jerusalem.

It was the first serious set-back, and roused great excitement in the Christian West. The Kings of France and England set out with great armies to re-establish the Crusading position, and this time they went for the strategic key of the whole country - Damascus. But they failed to take it: and when they and their men sailed back again the position of the Crusaders in Syria was as perilous as it had been before. They were guaranteed another lease of precarious security as long as the Mohammedan world was divided into rival bodies, but it was certain that if ever a leader should arise who could unify the Mohammedan power in his hands the little Christian garrisons were doomed.

And this is exactly what happened. Salah-ed-Din - whom we call Saladin - a soldier of genius, the son of a former Governor of Damascus, gradually acquired all power over the Mohammedan world of the Near East. He became master of Egypt, master of all the towns on the fringe of the desert, and when he marched to the attack with his united forces the remaining Christian body of Syria had no chance of victory. They made a fine rally, withdrawing every available man from their castle garrisons and forming a mobile force which attempted to relieve the siege of the castle of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. The Christian Army was approaching Tiberias and had got as far as the sloping mountain-side of Hattin, about a day's march away, when it was attacked by Saladin and destroyed.

That disaster, which took place in the summer of 1187, was followed by the collapse of nearly the whole Christian military colony in Syria and the Holy Land. Saladin took town after town, save one or two points on the sea coast which were to remain in Christian hands more than another lifetime. But the kingdom of Jerusalem, the feudal Christian realm which had recovered and held the Holy Places, was gone. Jerusalem itself fell of course, and its fall produced an enormous effect in Europe. All the great leaders, the King of England, Richard Plantagenet, the King of France and the Emperor, commanding jointly a large and first-rate army mainly German in recruitment, set out to recover what had been lost. But they failed. They managed to get hold of one or two more points on the coast, but they never retook Jerusalem and never re-established the old Christian kingdom.

Thus ended a series of three mighty duels between Christendom and Islam. Islam had won.

Had the Crusaders' remaining force at the end of the first Crusading march been a little more numerous, had they taken Damascus and the string of towns on the fringe of the desert, the whole history of the world would have been changed. The world of Islam would have been cut in two, with the East unable to approach the West; probably we Europeans would have recovered North Africa and Egypt - we should certainly have saved Constantinople - and Mohammedanism would have only survived as an Oriental religion thrust beyond the ancient boundaries of the Roman Empire. As it was Mohammedanism not only survived but grew stronger. It was indeed slowly thrust out of Spain and the eastern islands of the Mediterranean, but it maintained its hold on the whole of North Africa, Syria, Palestine, Asia Minor, and thence it went forward and conquered the Balkans and Greece, overran Hungary and twice threatened to overrun Germany and reach France again from the East, putting an end to our civilization. One of the reasons that the breakdown of Christendom at the Reformation took place was the fact that Mohammedan pressure against the German Emperor gave the German Princes and towns the opportunity to rebel and start Protestant Churches in their dominions.

Many expeditions followed against the Turk in one form or another; they were called Crusades, and the idea continued until the very end of the Middle Ages. But there was no recovery of Syria and no thrusting back of the Moslem.

Meanwhile the first Crusading march had brought so many new experiences to Western Europe that culture had developed very rapidly and produced the magnificent architecture and the high philosophy and social structure of the Middle Ages. That was the real fruit of the Crusades. They failed in their own field but they made modern Europe. Yet they made it at the expense of the old idea of Christian unity; with increasing material civilization, modern nations began to form, Christendom still held together, but it held together loosely. At last came the storm of the Reformation; Christendom broke up, the various nations and Princes claimed to be independent of any common control such as the moral position of the Papacy had insured, and we slid down that slope which was to end at last in the wholesale massacre of modern war - which may prove the destruction of our civilization. Napoleon Bonaparte very well said: *Every war in Europe is really a civil war.* It is profoundly true. Christian Europe is and should be by nature one; but it has forgotten its nature in forgetting its religion.

The last subject but one in our appreciation of the great Mohammedan attack upon the Catholic Church and the civilization she had produced, is the sudden last effort and subsequent rapid decline of Mohammedan political power just after it had reached its summit. The last subject of all in this connection, the one which I will treat next, is the very important and almost neglected question of whether Mohammedan power may not re-arise in the modern world.

If we recapitulate the fortunes of Islam after its triumph in beating back the Crusaders and restoring its dominion over the East and confirming its increasing grasp over half of what had once been a united Graeco-Roman Christendom, Islam proceeded to develop two completely different and even contradictory fortunes: it was gradually losing its hold on Western Europe while it was increasing its hold over South-eastern Europe.

In Spain it had already been beaten back halfway from the Pyrenees to the Straits of Gibraltar before the Crusades were launched and it was destined in the next four to five centuries to lose every inch of ground which it had governed in the Iberian Peninsula: today called Spain and Portugal. Continental Western Europe (and even the islands attached to it) was cleared of Mohammedan influence during the last centuries of the Middle Ages, the twelfth to fifteenth centuries.

This was because Mohammedans of the West, that is, what was then called "Barbary," what is now French and Italian North Africa, were politically separated from the vast majority of the Mohammedan world which lay to the East.

Between the Barbary states (which we call today Tunis, Algiers and Morocco) and Egypt, the desert made a barrier difficult to cross. The West was less barren in former times than it is today, and the Italians are reviving its prosperity. But the vast stretches of sand and gravel, with very little water, always made this barrier between Egypt and the West a deterrent and an obstacle. Yet, more important than this barrier was the gradual disassociation between the Western Mohammedans of North Africa and the mass of Mohammedans to the East thereof. The religion

indeed remained the same and the social habits and all the rest. Mohammedanism in North Africa remained one world with Mohammedanism in Syria, Asia and Egypt, just as the Christian civilization in the West of Europe remained for long one world with the Christian civilization of Central Europe and even of Eastern Europe. But distance and the fact that Eastern Mohammedans never sufficiently came to their help made the Western Mohammedans of North Africa and of Spain feel themselves something separate politically from their Eastern brethren.

To this we must add the factor of *distance* and its effect on sea power in those days and in those waters. The Mediterranean is much more than two thousand miles long; the only period of the year in which any effective fighting could be done on its waters under mediaeval conditions was the late spring, summer and early autumn and it is precisely in those five months of the year, when alone men could use the Mediterranean for great expeditions, that offensive military operations were handicapped by long calms. It is true these were met by the use of many-oared galleys so as to make fleets as little dependent on wind as possible, but still, distances of that kind did make unity of action difficult.

Therefore, the Mohammedans of North Africa not being supported at sea by the wealth and numbers of their brethren from the ports of Asia Minor and of Syria and the mouths of the Nile, gradually lost control of maritime communications. They lost, therefore, the Western islands, Sicily and Corsica and Sardinia, the Balearics and even Malta at the very moment when they were triumphantly capturing the Eastern islands in the Aegean Sea. The only form of sea power remaining to the Mohammedan in the West was the active piracy of the Algerian sailors operating from the lagoon of Tunis and the half-sheltered bay of Algiers. (The word "Algiers" comes from the Arabic word for "islands." There was no proper harbour before the French conquest of a hundred years ago, but there was a roadstead partially sheltered by a string of rocks and islets.) These pirates remained a peril right on until the seventeenth century. It is interesting to notice, for instance, that the Mohammedan call to prayer was heard on the coasts of Southern Ireland within the lifetime of Oliver Cromwell, for the Algerian pirates darted about everywhere, not only in the Western Mediterranean but along the coasts of the Atlantic, from the Straits of Gibraltar to the English Channel. They were no longer capable of conquest, but they could loot and take prisoners whom they held to ransom.

While this beating back of the Mohammedan into Africa was going on to the Western side of Europe, exactly the opposite was happening on the *eastern* side. After the Crusades had failed Mohammedans made themselves secure in Asia Minor and began that long hammering at Constantinople which finally succeeded.

Constantinople was by far the richest and greatest capital of the Ancient World; it was the old centre of Greek and Roman civilization and even when it had lost all direct political power over Italy, - and still more over France - it continued to be revered as the mighty monument of the Roman past. The Emperor of Constantinople was the direct heir of the Caesars. On the military side this very strong city supported by great masses of tribute and by a closely knit, well disciplined army, was the bulwark of Christendom. So long as Constantinople stood as a Christian city and Mass was still said in St. Sophia, the doors of Europe were locked against Islam. It fell in the same generation that saw the expulsion of the last Mohammedan Government from Southern Spain. Men who in their maturity marched into Granada with the victorious

armies of Isabella the Catholic could remember how, in early childhood, they had heard the awful news that Constantinople itself had fallen to the enemies of the Church.

The fall of Constantinople at the end of the Middle Ages (1453) was only the beginning of further Mohammedan advances. Islam swept all over the Balkans; it took all the Eastern Mediterranean islands, Crete and Rhodes and the rest; it completely occupied Greece; it began pushing up the Danube valley and northwards into the great plains; it destroyed the ancient kingdom of Hungary in the fatal battle of Mohacs and at last, in the first third of the sixteenth century, just at the moment when the storm of the Reformation had broken out Islam threatened Europe close at hand, bringing pressure upon the heart of the Empire, at Vienna.

It is not generally appreciated how the success of Luther's religious revolution against Catholicism in Germany was due to the way in which Mohammedan pressure from the East was paralysing the central authority of the German Emperors. They had to compromise with the leaders of the religious revolution and try to patch up a sort of awkward peace between the irreconcilable claims of Catholic authority and Protestant religious theory in order to meet the enemy at their gates; the enemy which had already overthrown Hungary and might well overthrow all of Southern Germany and perhaps reach the Rhine. If Islam had succeeded in doing this during the chaos of violent civil dissension among the Germans, due to the launching of the Reformation, our civilization would have been as effectively destroyed as it would have been if the first rush of the Mohammedans through Spain had not been checked and beaten back eight centuries earlier in the middle of France.

This violent Mohammedan pressure on Christendom from the East made a bid for success by sea as well as by land. The last great wave of Mongol soldiery, the last great Turkish organization working now from the conquered capital of Constantinople, proposed to cross the Adriatic, to attack Italy by sea and ultimately to recover all that had been lost in the Western Mediterranean.

There was one critical moment when it looked as though the scheme would succeed. A huge Mohammedan armada fought at the mouth of the Gulf of Corinth against the Christian fleet at Lepanto. The Christians won that naval action and the Western Mediterranean was saved. But it was a very close thing, and the name of Lepanto should remain in the minds of all men with a sense of history as one of the half dozen great names in the history of the Christian world. It has been a worthy theme for the finest battle poem of our time, "The Ballad of Lepanto," by the late Mr. Gilbert Chesterton.

Today we are accustomed to think of the Mohammedan world as something backward and stagnant, in all material affairs at least. We cannot imagine a great Mohammedan fleet made up of modern ironclads and submarines, or a great modern Mohammedan army fully equipped with modern artillery, flying power and the rest. But not so very long ago, *less than a hundred years before the Declaration of Independence*, the Mohammedan Government centred at Constantinople had better artillery and better army equipment of every kind than had we Christians in the West. The last effort they made to destroy Christendom was contemporary with the end of the reign of Charles II in England and of his brother James and of the usurper William III. It failed during the last years of the seventeenth century, only just over two hundred years

ago. Vienna, as we saw, was almost taken and only saved by the Christian army under the command of the King of Poland on a date that ought to be among the most famous in history - September 11, 1683. But the peril remained, Islam was still immensely powerful within a few marches of Austria and it was not until the great victory of Prince Eugene at Zenta in 1697 and the capture of Belgrade that the tide really turned - and by that time we were at the end of the seventeenth century.

It should be fully grasped that the generation of Dean Swift, the men who saw the court of Louis XIV in old age, the men who saw the Hanoverians brought in as puppet Kings for England by the dominating English wealthy class, the men who saw the apparent extinction of Irish freedom after the failure of James II's campaign at the Boyne and the later surrender of Limerick, all that lifetime which overlapped between the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, was dominated by a vivid memory of a Mohammedan threat which had nearly made good and which apparently might in the near future be repeated. The Europeans of that time thought of Mohammedanism as we think of Bolshevism or as white men in Asia think of Japanese power today.

What happened was something quite unexpected; the Mohammedan power began to break down on the material side. The Mohammedans lost the power of competing successfully with the Christians in the making of those instruments whereby dominion is assured; armament, methods of communication and all the rest of it. Not only did they not advance, they went back. Their artillery became much worse than ours. While our use of the sea vastly increased, theirs sank away till they had no first class ships with which to fight naval battles.

The eighteenth century is a story of their gradual losing of the race against the European in material things.

When that vast revolution in human affairs introduced by the invention of modern machinery began in England and spread slowly throughout Europe, the Mohammedan world proved itself quite incapable of taking advantage thereof. During the Napoleonic wars, although supported by England, Islam failed entirely to meet the French armies of Egypt; its last effort resulted in complete defeat (the land battle of the Nile).

All during the nineteenth century the process continued. As a result, Mohammedan North Africa was gradually subjected to European control; the last independent piece to go being Morocco. Egypt fell under the control of England. Long before that Greece had been liberated, and the Balkan States. Half a lifetime ago it was taken for granted everywhere that the last remnants of Mohammedan power in Europe would disappear. England bolstered it up and did save Constantinople from being taken by the Russians in 1877-78, but it seemed only a question of a few years before the Turks would be wiped out for good. Everyone was waiting for the end of Islam, on this side of the Bosphorus at least; while in Syria, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia it was losing all political and military vigour. After the Great War, what was left of Mohammedan power, even in hither Asia, was only saved by the violent quarrels between the Allies.

Even Syria and Palestine were divided between France and England. Mesopotamia fell under the control of England and no menace of Islamic power remained, though it was still entrenched

in Asia Minor and kept a sort of precarious hold on the thoroughly decayed city of Constantinople alone. The Mediterranean was gone; every inch of European territory was gone; all full control over African territory was gone; and the great duel between Islam and Christendom seemed at last to have been decided in our own day.

To what was due this collapse? I have never seen an answer to that question. There was no moral disintegration from within, there was no intellectual breakdown; you will find the Egyptian or Syrian student today, if you talk to him on any philosophical or scientific subject which he has studied, to be the equal of any European. If Islam has no physical science now applied to any of its problems, in arms and communications, it has apparently ceased to be part of our world and fallen definitely below it. Of every dozen Mohammedans in the world today, eleven are actually or virtually subjects of an Occidental power. It would seem, I repeat, as though the great duel was now decided.

But can we be certain it is so decided? I doubt it very much. It has always seemed to me possible, and even probable, that there would be a resurrection of Islam and that our sons or our grandsons would see the renewal of that tremendous struggle between the Christian culture and what has been for more than a thousand years its greatest opponent.

Why this conviction should have arisen in the minds of certain observers and travellers, such as myself, I will now consider. It is indeed a vital question, "May not Islam arise again?"

In a sense the question is already answered because Islam has never departed. It still commands the fixed loyalty and unquestioning adhesion of all the millions between the Atlantic and the Indus and further afield throughout scattered communities of further Asia. But I ask the question in the sense "Will not perhaps the temporal power of Islam return and with it the menace of an armed Mohammedan world which will shake off the domination of Europeans - still nominally Christian - and reappear again as the prime enemy of our civilization?" The future always comes as a surprise but political wisdom consists in attempting at least some partial judgment of what that surprise may be. And for my part I cannot but believe that a main unexpected thing of the future is the return of Islam. Since religion is at the root of all political movements and changes and since we have here a very great religion physically paralysed but morally intensely alive, we are in the presence of an unstable equilibrium which cannot remain permanently unstable. Let us then examine the position.

I have said throughout these pages that the particular quality of Mohammedanism, regarded as a heresy, was its vitality. Alone of all the great heresies Mohammedanism struck permanent roots, developing a life of its own, and became at last something like a new religion. So true is this that today very few men, even among those who are highly instructed in history, recall the truth that Mohammedanism was essentially in its origins not a new religion, but a *heresy*.

Like all heresies, Mohammedanism lived by the Catholic truths which it had retained. Its insistence on personal immortality, on the Unity and Infinite Majesty of God, on His Justice and Mercy, its insistence on the equality of human souls in the sight of their Creator - these are its strength.

But it has survived for other reasons than these; all the other great heresies had their truths as well as their falsehoods and vagaries, yet they have died one after the other. The Catholic Church has seen them pass, and though their evil consequences are still with us the heresies themselves are dead.

The strength of Calvinism was the truth on which it insisted, the Omnipotence of God, the dependence and insufficiency of man; but its error, which was the negation of free-will, also killed it. For men could not permanently accept so monstrous a denial of common sense and common experience. Arianism lived by the truth that was in it, to wit, the fact that the reason could not directly reconcile the opposite aspects of a great mystery - that of the Incarnation. But Arianism died because it added to this truth a falsehood, to wit, that the apparent contradiction could be solved by denying the full Divinity of Our Lord.

And so on with the other heresies. But Mohammedanism, though it also contained errors side by side with those great truths, flourished continually, *and as a body of doctrine is flourishing still*, though thirteen hundred years have passed since its first great victories in Syria. The causes of this vitality are very difficult to explore, and perhaps cannot be reached. For myself I should ascribe it in some part to the fact that Mohammedanism being a thing from the outside, a heresy that did not arise from within the body of the Christian community but beyond its frontiers, has always possessed a reservoir of men, newcomers pouring in to revivify its energies. But that cannot be a full explanation; perhaps Mohammedanism would have died but for the successive waves of recruitment from the desert and from Asia; perhaps it would have died if the Caliphate at Baghdad had been left entirely to itself; and if the Moors in the West had not been able to draw upon continual recruitment from the South.

Whatever the cause be, Mohammedanism has survived, and vigorously survived. Missionary effort has had no appreciable effect upon it. It still converts pagan savages wholesale. It even attracts from time to time some European eccentric, who joins its body. *But the Mohammedan never becomes a Catholic.* No fragment of Islam ever abandons its sacred book, its code of morals, its organized system of prayer, its simple doctrine.

In view of this, anyone with a knowledge of history is bound to ask himself whether we shall not see in the future a revival of Mohammedan political power, and the renewal of the old pressure of Islam upon Christendom.

We have seen how the material political power of Islam declined very rapidly during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We have just followed the story of that decline. When Suleiman the Magnificent was besieging Vienna he had better artillery, better energies and better everything than his opponents; Islam was still in the field the material superior of Christendom - at least it was the superior in fighting power and fighting instruments. That was within a very few years of the opening of the eighteenth century. Then came the inexplicable decline. The religion did not decay, but its political power and with that its material power declined astonishingly, and in the particular business of arms it declined most of all. When Dr. Johnson's father, the bookseller, was setting up business at Lichfield, the Grand Turk was still dreaded as a potential conqueror of Europe; before Dr. Johnson was dead no Turkish fleet or army could trouble the West. Not a lifetime later, the Mohammedan in North Africa had fallen subject to the

French; and those who were then young men lived to see nearly all Mohammedan territory, except for a decaying fragment ruled from Constantinople, firmly subdued by the French and British Governments.

These things being so, the recrudescence of Islam, the possibility of that terror under which we lived for centuries reappearing, and of our civilization again fighting for its life against what was its chief enemy for a thousand years, seems fantastic. Who in the Mohammedan world today can manufacture and maintain the complicated instruments of modern war? Where is the political machinery whereby the religion of Islam can play an equal part in the modern world?

I say the suggestion that Islam may re-arise sounds fantastic - but this is only because men are always powerfully affected by the immediate past: - one might say that they are blinded by it.

Cultures spring from religions; ultimately the vital force which maintains any culture is its philosophy, its attitude toward the universe; the decay of a religion involves the decay of the culture corresponding to it - we see that most clearly in the breakdown of Christendom today. The bad work begun at the Reformation is bearing its final fruit in the dissolution of our ancestral doctrines - the very structure of our society is dissolving.

In the place of the old Christian enthusiasms of Europe there came, for a time, the enthusiasm for nationality, the religion of patriotism. But self-worship is not enough, and the forces which are making for the destruction of our culture, notably the Jewish Communist propaganda from Moscow, have a likelier future before them than our old-fashioned patriotism.

In Islam there has been no such dissolution of ancestral doctrine - or, at any rate, nothing corresponding to the universal break-up of religion in Europe. The whole spiritual strength of Islam is still present in the masses of Syria and Anatolia, of the East Asian mountains, of Arabia, Egypt and North Africa.

The final fruit of this tenacity, the second period of Islamic power, may be delayed: - but I doubt whether it can be permanently postponed.

There is nothing in the Mohammedan civilization itself which is hostile to the development of scientific knowledge or of mechanical aptitude. I have seen some good artillery work in the hands of Mohammedan students of that arm; I have seen some of the best driving and maintenance of mechanical road transport conducted by Mohammedans. There is nothing inherent to Mohammedanism to make it incapable of modern science and modern war. Indeed the matter is not worth discussing. It should be self-evident to anyone who has seen the Mohammedan culture at work. That culture happens to have fallen back in material applications; there is no reason whatever why it should not learn its new lesson and become our equal in all those temporal things which now *alone* give us our superiority over it - whereas in *Faith* we have fallen inferior to it.

People who question this may be misled by a number of false suggestions dating from the immediate past. For instance, it was a common saying during the nineteenth century that Mohammedanism had lost its political power through its doctrine of fatalism. But that doctrine

was in full vigour when the Mohammedan power was at its height. For that matter Mohammedanism is no more fatalist than Calvinism; the two heresies resemble each other exactly in their exaggerated insistence upon the immutability of Divine decrees.

There was another more intelligent suggestion made in the nineteenth century, which was this: that the decline of Islam had proceeded from its fatal habit of perpetual civil division: the splitting up and changeability of political authority among the Mohammedans. But that weakness of theirs was present from the beginning; it is inherent in the very nature of the Arabian temperament from which they started. Over and over again this individualism of theirs, this "fissiparous" tendency of theirs, has gravely weakened them; yet over and over again they have suddenly united under a leader and accomplished the greatest things.

Now it is probable enough that on these lines - unity under a leader - the return of Islam may arrive. There is no leader as yet, but enthusiasm might bring one and there are signs enough in the political heavens today of what we may have to expect from the revolt of Islam at some future date - perhaps not far distant.

After the Great War the Turkish power was suddenly restored by one such man. Another such man in Arabia, with equal suddenness, affirmed himself and destroyed all the plans laid for the incorporation of that part of the Mohammedan world into the English sphere. Syria, which is the connecting link, the hinge and the pivot of the whole Mohammedan world, is, upon the map, and superficially, divided between an English and a French mandate; but the two Powers intrigue one against the other and are equally detested by their Mohammedan subjects, who are only kept down precariously by force. There has been bloodshed under the French mandate more than once and it will be renewed[2] while under the English mandate the forcing of an alien Jewish colony upon Palestine has raised the animosity of the native Arab population to white heat. Meanwhile a ubiquitous underground Bolshevik propaganda is working throughout Syria and North Africa continually, against the domination of Europeans over the original Mohammedan population.

Lastly there is this further point to which attention should be paid: the attachment (such as it is) of the Mohammedan world in India to English rule is founded mainly upon the gulf between the Mohammedan and Hindu religions. Every step towards a larger political independence for either party strengthens the Mohammedan desire for renewed power. The Indian Mohammedan will more and more tend to say: "If I am to look after myself and not to be favoured as I have been in the past by the alien European master in India - which I once ruled - I will rely upon the revival of Islam." For all these reasons (and many more might be added) men of foresight may justly apprehend, or at any rate expect, the return of Islam.

It would seem as though the Great Heresies were granted an effect proportionate to the lateness of their appearance in the story of Christendom.

The earlier heresies on the Incarnation, when they died out, left no enduring relic of their presence. Arianism was revived for a moment in the general chaos of the Reformation. Sundry scholars, including Milton in England and presumably Bruno in Italy and a whole group of Frenchmen, put forward doctrines in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which attempted to reconcile a modified materialism and a denial of the Trinity with some part of Christian religion.

Milton's effort was particularly noticeable. English official history has, of course, suppressed it as much as possible, by the usual method of scamping all emphasis upon it. The English historians do not deny Milton's materialism; quite recently several English writers on Milton have discoursed at length on his refusal of full Divinity to Our Lord. But this effort at suppression will break down, for one cannot ever hide a thing so important as Milton's attack, not only on the Incarnation, but on the Creation, and on the Omnipotence of Almighty God.

But of that I will speak later when we come to the Protestant movement. It remains generally true that the earlier heresies not only died out but left no enduring memorial of their action on European society.

But Mohammedanism coming as much later than Arianism as Arianism was later than the Apostles has left a profound effect on the political structure of Europe and upon language: even to some extent on science.

Politically, it destroyed the independence of the Eastern Empire and though various fragments have, some of them, revived in maimed fashion, the glory and unity of Byzantine rule disappeared for ever under the attacks of Islam. The Russian Tsardom, oddly enough, took over a maimed inheritance from Byzantium, but it was a very poor reflection of the old Greek splendour. The truth is that Islam permanently wounded the east of our civilization in such fashion the barbarism partly returned. On North Africa its effect was almost absolute and remains so to this day. Europe has been quite unable to reassert herself there. The great Greek tradition has utterly vanished from the Valley of the Nile and from the Delta, unless one calls Alexandria some sort of relic thereof, with its mainly European civilization, French and Italian, but beyond that right up to the Atlantic the old order failed apparently for ever. The French in taking over the administration of Barbary and planting therein a considerable body of their own colonists, of Spaniards, and of Italians, have left the main structure of North African society wholly Mohammedan; and there is no sign of its becoming anything else.

In what measure Islam affected our science and our philosophy is open to debate. Its effect has been, of course, heavily exaggerated, because to exaggerate it was a form of attack upon Catholicism. The main part of what writers on mathematics, physical science and geography, from the Islamic side, writers who wrote in Arabic, who professed either the full doctrine of Islam or some heretical form of it (sometimes almost atheist) was drawn from the Greek and Roman civilization which Islam had overwhelmed. It remains true that Islam handed on through such writers a great part of the advances in those departments of knowledge which the Graeco-Roman civilization had made.

During the Dark Ages and even during the early Middle Ages, or at any rate the very early Middle Ages, the Mohammedan world detained the better part of academic teaching and we had to turn to it for our own instruction.

The effect of Mohammedanism on Christian language, though of course a superficial matter, is remarkable. We find it in a host of words, including such very familiar ones as "algebra," "alcohol," "admiral," etc. We find it in the terms of heraldry, and we find it abundantly in place names. Indeed, it is remarkable to see how place names of Roman and Greek origin have been

replaced by totally different Semitic terms. Half the rivers of Spain, especially in the southern part of the country, include the term "wadi," and it is curious to note how far in the Western Hemisphere "Guadeloupe" preserves an Arabic form drawn from Estremadura.

The towns in North Africa and the villages for that matter as a rule were rebaptized, the names of the most famous for instance, Carthage and Caesarea, disappeared. Others arose spontaneously, such as "Algiers," a name derived from the Arabic phrase for "the islands" - the old roadstead of Algiers owing its partial security to a line of rocky islets parallel with the coast.

The whole story of this replacing of the original names of towns and rivers by Semitic forms is one of the most valuable examples we have of the disconnection between language and race. The race in North Africa from Libya westward is much of what it has been from the beginning of recorded time. It is Berber. Yet the Berber language survives only in a few hill districts and in desert tribes. The Punic, the Greek, the Latin, the common speech of Tripoli (a surviving Greek name, by the way), Tunis, and all Barbary, have quite gone. Such an example should have given pause to the academic theorists who talked of the English as "Anglo-Saxon," and argued from their place names that the English had come over from North Germany and Denmark in little boats, exterminated everybody east of Cornwall and replanted it with their own communities. Yet of such fantasies a good deal survives, most strongly, of course, at Oxford and Cambridge.

1 It was from this fact that certain French writers opposed to the Church got their enormous blunder, that the Immaculate Conception came to us from Mohammedan sources! Gibbon, of course, copies his masters blindly here as he always does, and he repeats the absurdity in his "Decline and Fall."

2 Written in March, 1936.